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1962/10/24

TELCON  
McNamara  
Ball  
10/24/62, 10:40 p.m.

Ball - Just for your information, we have just had a message in from K to the Pres. It is a long hysterical document and actually the first 2/3 part, I haven't been able to decipher fully because it is still garbled, and we are getting it corrected. In general ~~he~~ takes the line in the first 2/3 that he is doing this for domestic political purposes and you know better, and you know we can't abide by this and that we aren't interested at all in what the OAS is doing and do you find any morality in what you are doing, etc. The significant part is the last paragraph which as best as I can make out reads something like ~~this~~ this. GWB reads last paragraph. He has really kind of laid the gauntlet down.

McNamara - He says he is going to clear out the offensive ~~off~~ weapons ships and he is going to probe the quarantine with non-offensive weapons ships.

Ball - Whether this means submarines, or whether it means he runs them through and let us take the responsibility for shooting.

McNamara - I think that is what it means.

Ball - I talked to the President about it. I told him I would get hold of you and Dean and simply call your attention to this. I don't think we have any option but to go ahead in the morning. This is something we might well have expected so I don't think that it's anything very exceptional.

McNamara - I don't see any problem tonight with it. There are so few Soviet ships left out there.

Ball - What is likely to be the first pick-up in the morning is a tanker.

McNamara - Yes.

Ball - Does it look as though we would get a friendly ship before we got one of theirs, or what.

McNamara - It is hard to tell. I think we got a ship with a Coast Guard vessel today -- a Greek ship. The plan is to query friendly ships as to destination, cargo, name, etc. and allow them to proceed at that. We can do the same thing to the Soviet shipx if it is

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obviously a tanker.

Ball - That kind of makes nonsense of the quarantine, doesn't it?

McNamara - No, I think that if it's a tanker ~~were brought~~ without a deck load it doesn't make nonsense of the quarantine. You can't put anything down in the holes of a tanker. Most tankers, at least, have entry ports that are so small that you can't get anything down there. They'll have to examine it. The Soviet tanker is different. There's one tanker in particular that has a tremendous deck load on it. It looks to me at least to be missile fuel. Great big tanks that look like \_\_\_\_\_ tanks which is what they declared it to be when they went through \_\_\_\_\_.

Ball - Where is that.

McNamara - Interestingly enough, it is in the Cycee (?). He got a message, ~~xx~~ but he hasn't turned completely around; he just turned to northwest from southwest. He is just roaming around out there, at the present time as best we ~~xxx~~ can tell.

Ball - I think it is important that at some point we establish the quarantine by really going on and inspecting one of their ships. What are the chances in getting to that tomorrow.

McNamara - I think it is largely up to us. There is only one Soviet ship within range of the blockade and that is the tanker without the deck load and I wouldn't think that is a very good case to start on.

Ball - No. I think that is right. I do want us to get the principle established.

McNamara - We establish the principle by going along side and hailing it. If it refuses to respond then we have got a good case to go on board.

Ball - Is that likely to be fairly early?

McNamara - It is likely to be early in the morning but the Commander of the ship is likely to intercept, we don't know because the ocean is so large and it is difficult to say precisely where he is. The Commander of the ship has no authority to board, ~~xx~~ he has only authority to query. In order to ~~xxx~~ board, he has to get authority.

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Ball - I think we just go ahead on that basis and see what happens.

McNamara - I do too. If this intercept occurs during the night, I will be awakened.

Ball - I will be here all night.

McNamara - I think we can keep in close communication.

Ball - OK.

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